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DE RUEHRO #0268 0641555
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9932
INFO RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0757
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 0580
RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY 0342
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0810
RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9282
RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 2939
RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 3091

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000268

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DEPARTMENT FOR IO/PSC TANAZ KHAMBATTA, IO/PSC ERIN CROWE,
AND AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2018

TAGS: PREL UNSC KPKO ER ET IT

SUBJECT: ITALY: ERITREAN BEHAVIOR UNACCEPTABLE, BUT MORE
WORK NEEDED TO RESOLVE BORDER DISPUTE

REF: STATE 21218

Classified By: Political Officer Gabriel Escobar, for reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff delivered reftel demarche March 4 to MFA East Africa Office Director Mario Sammartino and UN Desk Officer Gabriella Biondi, seeking Italian views on the future of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and the possibility of sanctions or other measures targeted at Eritrea. Sammartino and Biondi agreed that Eritrea's belligerent behavior was unacceptable and could establish a worrisome precedent for other UN peacekeeping operations. They said that Italy could support a sanctions resolution against Eritrea if there was consensus among UNSC members to take such action. Sammartino worried that Eritrea may not respond constructively to sanctions, and said that any measures should be directed toward changing behavior and not simply punishing Eritrea.

¶3. (C) Sammartino said that while Eritrea's obstruction of UNMEE's mission was unacceptable, the international community needed to re-engage to push for a resolution to the boundary dispute, which was at the heart of the current conflict, and which remained unresolved almost 6 years since the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission issued its final verdict. While he and Biondi agreed that it was inappropriate to link the border dispute with Eritrea's restrictions on UNMEE's freedom to operate, they said that the international community and the UN must do more to press for a final resolution of the boundary question.

¶4. (C) Biondi said Italy supports a continued UN presence on the ground. She doubted that a civilian political mission alone would be sufficient, and worried that reducing UNMEE significantly, or scrapping it altogether, increased the likelihood of violent conflict between the two sides.

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